

Governor's proposed cuts would affect 1.3 million low-income seniors and people with disabilities

Washington, DC - Rep. Linda Sánchez and four other members of the California Congressional Delegation sent a letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today, urging him to spare Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) recipients from his proposed statewide budgetary cuts.

"The Governor has already planned to cut a variety of public assistance, health, and education programs," said Rep. Linda Sánchez. "We cannot pull the rug out from under seniors and those who need help the most. I urge Governor Schwarzenegger to think about the implications of his proposal before he slashes their benefits."

Rep. Linda Sánchez is a member of the Ways and Means Committee and its Subcommittee on Social Security.

Full text is as follows:

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

As you continue to work toward restoring the state of California to fiscal stability, we write to urge you to reconsider your proposal to cut critical State Supplemental Payment (SSP) benefits to Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) recipients in California as of October 2009.

Full funding for this public assistance program will keep the most vulnerable Californians from sliding further into poverty. In addition, their ability to afford necessities like food, clothing, and shelter will put money back into the economy, helping to further the state's economic recovery.

We are aware that you are grappling with a \$24 billion budget deficit and certainly understand the competing interests before you as well as the difficult decisions you face. However, we also understand the harmful consequences that further cutting SSP payments will have on the 1.3 million Californians affected.

If enacted, your proposal to cut the SSP grant program in October will mark the third time this year that California's elderly and disabled will see a reduction in their benefits. As a result, an estimated 18,000 SSI/SSP recipients who would otherwise be eligible for the SSP payment would lose their entire benefit.

Perhaps more devastating are the individuals who will lose their Medi-Cal eligibility due to the SSP cuts already enacted. In July 32,000 individuals will lose assistance and even more in October unless this proposal is rescinded. Medi-Cal provides critical healthcare assistance to this fragile population; cutting it in addition to cash assistance will only hasten the slide of some SSP recipients from poverty into homelessness or worse.

We strongly believe that cutting State Supplementary Payment benefits to our most vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities is detrimental to California's future and will hinder our economic recovery. We encourage you to continue looking for alternative ways to help the state close its budget gap without hurting our seniors and disabled.

Respectfully,

Linda Sánchez  
Fortney "Pete" Stark  
Bob Filner  
Diane Watson  
Grace Napolitano